

Jeremiah 26:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then rose up certain of the elders of the land, and spake to all the assembly of the people, saying,

Analysis

Then rose up certain of the elders of the land—The זִקְנִים (zekenim, elders) were respected leaders whose age and experience gave them moral authority. Their intervention at this critical juncture provides legal and historical precedent to support Jeremiah's acquittal. Their spontaneous defense suggests God providentially placed sympathetic voices in the assembly to preserve His prophet. The phrase 'rose up' (וַיַּעֲמֹד, vayakumu) indicates deliberate, public action—they stepped forward to speak when Jeremiah's life hung in balance.

And spake to all the assembly of the people, saying—Their address to 'הַעֲמָדָה' (kehal ha'am, 'the assembly of the people') invokes communal memory and covenant history. By appealing to precedent rather than arguing theology, the elders wisely navigate the charged atmosphere. This demonstrates that God's truth can be defended through historical evidence, reasoned argument, and appeal to shared values—not only through prophetic declaration. Their intervention models how believers should speak truth in public forums: with respect, historical awareness, and persuasive reasoning.

Historical Context

The elders' role as community arbiters and tradition-bearers made them ideal defenders. Their corporate memory extended beyond most citizens' personal recollection, allowing them to cite Micah's precedent from Hezekiah's era (715-686 BC), roughly a century earlier. This demonstrates the importance of

knowing Scripture and church history—the elders saved Jeremiah by remembering how previous generations handled similar prophetic challenges. Their intervention also suggests that faithful remnants exist even in apostate societies, positioned by God to influence critical decisions.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does the elders' intervention demonstrate God's providential placement of defenders for His servants in hostile environments?
2. What does their appeal to historical precedent teach about the value of knowing Scripture and church history when defending truth?
3. In what ways can mature believers today serve as 'elders' who speak wisdom into contentious situations?

Interlinear Text

כֹּל אֶל לְאמֹר:
Then rose up certain of the elders of the land and spake
H6965 H582 H2205 H776 H559 H413 H3605

לְאמֹר:
to all the assembly of the people and spake
H6951 H5971 H559

Additional Cross-References

Acts 5:34 (Parallel theme): Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space;

